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UNCLAS SANTO DOMINGO 001453

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, WHA/EPSC, G/TIP, EB/TPP/BTA,
EB/IFD/OMA; NSC FOR SHANNON AND MADISON; LABOR FOR ILAB;
USCINCSO ALSO FOR POLAD; TREASURY FOR OASIA-LCARTER
USDOC FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION
USDOC FOR 3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EFIN](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [PREL](#) [DR](#) [CI](#)

SUBJECT: DOMINICAN CONGRESSIONAL BLUSTER LIKELY TO BE
SHORT-LIVED

REF: A. SANTO DOMINGO 1026 (NOTAL)

[1B.](#) SANTO DOMINGO 1293 (NOTAL)

[¶1.](#) (U) The opposition PRD in the Dominican congress has held up legislative business all this week out of professed indignation against the administration, but President Fernandez is likely to calm them down once he gets back this weekend. A clumsy raid on the offices of former Agriculture Minister Eligio Jaquez ignited the confrontation. The Attorney General's office cancelled its summons of Jaquez for interrogation on allegations of political patronage.

[¶2.](#) (U) Tension between the opposition-controlled Congress and President Fernandez flared up again, repeating a the standoff in late February that delayed consideration of authorizing legislation for bonds in connection with the IMF standby program (Ref A). On March 9, the opposition PRD congressional representatives, nearly half of the membership, boycotted sessions to protest a raid on the private office of former agriculture minister Eligio Jaquez, connected to allegations of misuse of public funds to finance a greenhouses. They called the search a "political action" and an "outrage" and threatened to suspend sessions "until the government returns to legality." The search of the office of a former under secretary of the environment added to their irritation.

[¶3.](#) (U) On March 10, PRD senators (29 of the 32 members of that body) announced they would block approval of three bills pending in the Senate to authorize issuance of bonds worth RD 8.282 billion (USD 287 million) "unless the government ceases judicial persecution" of PRD leaders. PLD Secretary General Reinaldo Pared Perez denounced the PRD's "vulgar blackmail." Presidential Legal Adviser Cesar Pino Toribio said the searches were conducted properly under judicial orders.

[¶4.](#) (SBU) The deadlock will probably be short-lived. House of Representatives President Alfredo Pacheco told the DCM late on March 10 that his chamber would convene for its next regular session on Tuesday, March 15, to examine the bond issue and to form a bicameral committee on CAFTA ratification. Pacheco also said there was overwhelming sentiment in the House to strip convicted alien smuggler Congressman Radhames Ramos Garcia (PRD) of his immunity so he could serve his 18-month prison sentence immediately. Pacheco commented that the boycott was a political gesture, "something that occurs from time to time."

HERTELL